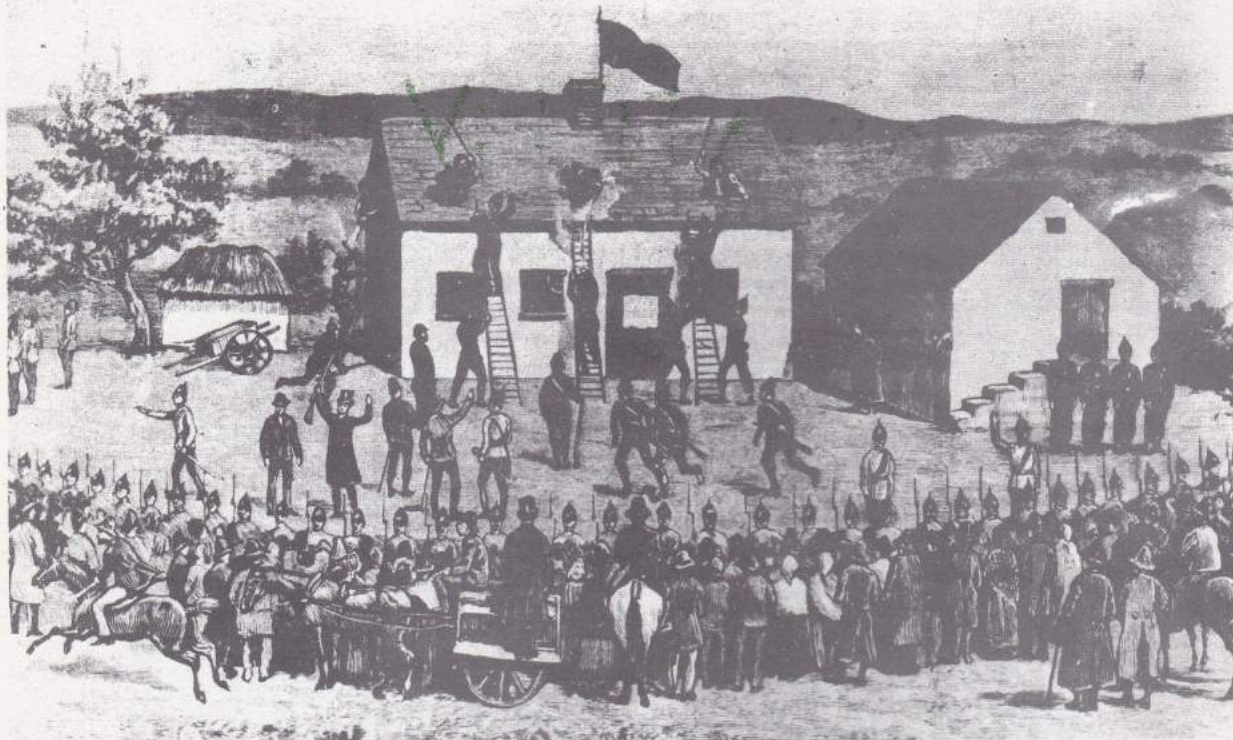


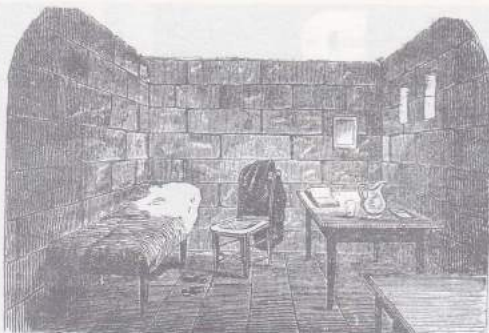
ANARCHY 307 308





An eviction siege in 1886, during the Land War of the 1880's. Below a Connacht family still defies eviction from their cottage even after its being breached by battering ram.





ANARCHY VOLUME ONE NUMBER ELEVEN

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I couldn't find a picture of a helicopter,
to put in but our congratulations to the
people who carried out the raid

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Progress:
1969 - 1973





Robert Carr, answering questions on the riot some days after it had apparently 'died down', said that the modern conditions which existed at Gartree did not in any way contribute to the violence and destruction which took place. Well, not to put too fine a point on it, the opposite view should be taken. The conditions, call them modern or what you will, appear to have contributed to a great extent to the violence and destruction which took place there, and maybe even contributed to the escape attempt.

Before looking at the chain of events that lead up to it, some mention must be made of the history common to almost all the prisoners over in Gartree at that time, for all of

them have served sentences before, and share a common experience of indignities, insults, injustices, atrocious conditions, provocation, humiliation and brutality in relation to their imprisonment. But also, two other things: many of the prisoners there had been 'fitted up' on conspiracy charges and jailed on the grounds of supposition and inference. Although we have a tendency to regard 'Conspiracy' as a device only used against known 'political dissidents', in fact the politics of the matter are not so mysterious or peculiar to the left. Apart from its being erected and used against early trade-unions, combinations etc., for a long time it has been used to gather in all known bank-robbers, hijackers and the like. The state through its various

agencies, primarily the police and the courts, has been using the charge of conspiracy on anyone who is a danger to accumulated wealth. It's a sort of security operation put into practice to protect the Bank of Great Britain Ltd.

The other relevant factor was the Parkhurst Riot of 1969, for many prisoners were moved afterwards from Parkhurst to Gartree. In outline, what happened at Parkhurst was some 40 prisoners having taken too much of the brutality, provocation and violence directed at them over two or three years from the warders, staged a sit-down in an association room and demanded to see the governor. Instead, some 200 warders gathered outside, armed themselves with riot-sticks (it was a quite straightforward and peaceful demonstration) and charged into the room and beat every prisoner up. Then later on they formed themselves into a two-column 'gauntlet' along which numerous prisoners were made to walk, being beaten by each and every warder (about 80) along the way. The outcome of it was that 9 prisoners were put on trial, found guilty and sentenced to extra terms of imprisonment ranging from 18 months to 5 years. (No-one has yet published extracts from that trial. Maybe we should; it is an education: all liberals and reformers should read it.) What came out at the trial was that one warder received a superficial cut on the neck, whilst some 700 stitches had to be put in the wounds of some 20-odd prisoners. The doctor of the prison was the only one who went against their conspiracy; he said at the trial that he had never seen anything so brutal and terrifying as what had been done to a handful of prisoners. The Home Office, after a suitable lapse of time, opened what they called an experimental wing in the prison 'to treat violent prisoners'.

Finally it should be said that sentences of prisoners at Gartree range from 5 years to life-plus-20 years. More than enough reason to escape, in fact strange if they didn't try to.

Most of the prisoners go to Gartree having passed through the re-allocation prisons of Wormwood Scrubs, Wandsworth or Winston Green, Liverpool (the most brutalising, inhuman prisons imaginable; even Karkov does not have a look in with any of these prisons). And so they go to Gartree where they expect

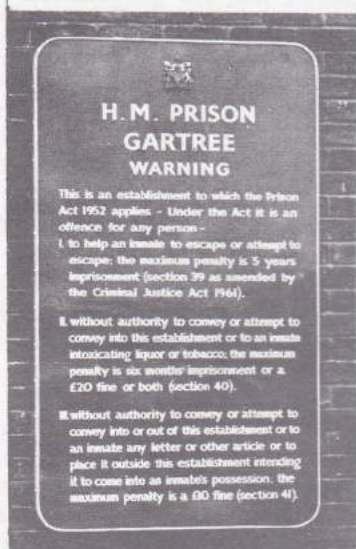
to spend the greater part of their lives, and they find the food is absolutely terrible and the work long, boring and exploitative. It is no surprise that between April and November 1972 there were 28 strikes, demonstrations and protests, and the great majority of them over those issues. In answer to a question from Bernadette Devlin in the House of Commons, Mark Carlisle the Under-Secretary of State informed us that prison guard-dogs are allocated £2.50 per week food allowance while prisoners are allocated £1.20 per week.

The food situation must be considered at the same time as the work situation for the two are indivisible. Gartree is a 'new' prison. There is an 'improvement' from the usual prison work of sewing mail-bags etc. to one of assembly line factory work, and very much evidence that our government has decided that prisoners are all of a sudden real economic propositions and that prisoners could be profitable (last year the profit from prison work was £10 million). So now they face 40 hours a week, in assembly line work, to produce these goods, to make this profit, but be paid between nothing and £4.50 per week and be fed sloppy and unwholesome food on which to try to do the next day's work. Top wages in practice are certain to be nowhere near £4.50, knowing prisons, probably around £1.00. Out of this after buying tobacco, toothpaste etc. in most prisons people try to supplement their diet.

But whatever they do the prisoners do not possess one single 'civil right' of any description, no way of putting forward any feelings or grievances, except by demonstration or strike.

Then there occurred the one day sit-out demo in support of PROP and the Charter of Prisoners Rights, in conjunction with other prisons. It was conducted peacefully, orderly and without any intimidation. What happened after? The authorities locked everyone up, imposed a fine of one or two weeks wages, solitary confinement and in some cases 'loss of remission' i.e. a sentence of extra imprisonment. The Home Office also spent thousands of pounds putting up roll after roll of barbed wire around the edges of all the prison roofs. Actions calculated to increase any bitterness and frustration.

Then on August 28th a prisoner in the prison hospital is alleged to have been beaten up by one of the warders. Anyway there was another strike on August 29th, and a meeting was demanded with the prison governor. The prisoner had of course been charged with assaulting the prison warden. Nobody ever gets acquitted from such a charge by the visiting magistrates (who come into prisons and deal with 'serious offences' like being beaten up by the screws), but punishments vary and one might only get a week down the punishment block. Apparently the warden was not injured when he was 'assaulted' although the prisoner was. However he was sentenced to 60 days loss of remission (i. e. 2 months more to be served at the end of his sentence), 30 days solitary confinement and 15 days bread and water.



Who is to say why this particular incident did not figure as another score to be noted and repressed, to be paid for in increased bitterness and frustration. Instead it was the release trigger. On Friday 3rd September at 12.00 noon a sit-out commenced and went on for three days until Monday 6th at 12.00. After the sentence had become known all the prisoners had gathered in the association room feeling angry and bitter. It was decided to stage a sit-out for 72 hours, with no violence, nothing broken, quite peaceful. The authorities' answer was to lock-in the whole prison from Monday for the next three days, to fine everyone a week's wages, and to pick out some individuals for solitary, others for

loss of remission. Being locked up for three days some people began to break up their cells, not many, but a few. The dialogue the prisoners had attempted to start was closed, smashed. The anger, bitterness, disgust and frustration were once again driven underground and internalised.

Then two months later, on the 26th of November, 14 men went on an attempted escape. From the press reports it seemed a desperate attempt quite likely to fail. It was maybe tried out hoping that one prisoner, just one, would make it, it didn't matter which. Nobody made it, they got beat up, got sentences of 300 and 400 days solitary, and years loss of remission was imposed on them. The press at the time tried to make out that the riot that followed was a part of the escape plan. It has now become clear that what happened was that 14 prisoners made an attempt to get out of what had become a hell-hole. The warders, recapturing them, smashed them up and more, attacking the prisoners inside the prison block, caused a full riot to develop. Another version I've heard is that the prisoners inside in fact attacked some of the screws when they saw a screw hitting one of the recaptured prisoners with a claw-hammer. Whichever way, the riot started after the prisoners, or most of them, had been recaptured.

Following the Gartree riot there were demands for more 'security' or repression from the conservative press. But also there were attacks on the Gartree prisoners made by the liberals and particularly liberals involved to some extent in various reform movements. The Guardian came out with the classic phrases - 'The riot at Gartree is serious both for its violence and because it threatens prison reform.' Not only the old liberals came out with this line; they were joined by some of the people in PROP. In particular Douglas Curtis, one of the founders of PROP, went into print (the Guardian providing the space) with -

'The riot at Gartree maximum security prison is disturbing evidence of "over-kill" in the campaign for penal reform. Just when the reformers, liberal Law Lords and ex-prisoners included, looked like coming up with a successful recipe the top has been blown off the pressure cooker again.'

'One does not have to be an "Uncle Tom" or a "wishy-washy liberal" to appreciate the need for maturity and balance in a tense, but promising political situation. But balance implies adjustments on both sides of the scale.'

The first argument is the 'doing harm to one's own cause'. One difficulty with it is not its logic, but the lack of convincing evidence. The argument sounds good, may even be correct, but long-term evidence is lacking. As this type of argument tends to break the solidarity of the movement, in this case tending to divide the prisoners in Gartree from those in other prisons, it is about time the liberals either substantiated it with evidence that can be tested or dropped it, instead of trotting it out every time events happen differently to their precious 'master plan', which is as odious as the academic master plans of the Marxists.

Douglas Curtis sees the riot wholly from his viewpoint, and its effects on his master plan, forgetting it seems that neither he nor his plans had any part in the riot. Prisons will not disappear while he and his law lords etc. make up their 'plans' and 'recipes'. The Gartree prisoners are not in a position to sit and analyse how the reform movement is going. Maybe the riots were part of the 'survive till next year' movement, but it is difficult to see them as part of the reform campaign. Look at all the versions of events at Gartree. They obviously affect the reform demands. History may show whether they came at a good or a bad time. Prison reform is not an easy area to work in; sometimes events will go in your favour, sometimes not. That's the way it goes. (I'm not saying do not try consciously to shape events, or exercise self-control, just these events did not grow out of anybody consciously trying to affect prison reform.)

Prisoners are probably more aware than anyone of the need to keep it cool, as they are getting up to a year solitary and years of extra imprisonment as well as ending up in the hospital. There may be a feeling that the liberals are saying keep quiet for the next five years so when there is another major riot in 1978 we can again express our surprise that it is not sunshine and honey inside.

Francis Boyd wrote an article for the Guardian entitled 'Power behind bars' - about prison reform! In this article he quotes a QC and prison reformer Louis Blom-Cooper as writing that (the problem is) that 'prison officers do not know whether they are expected to be turnkeys or therapists' - obviously a problem and a proposition which Mr Boyd himself endorses and contributes to. It is of course a very false and mystifying proposition. It's probably one of the most enduring devices erected by the bourgeoisie, manufactured by them, with the fervent assistance of a whole school of bourgeois criminologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and used as a very strong alibi by which can be concealed the real crimes committed from mass exploitation, social and psychological deprivation, genocide, inculcation... and a device used not only as a tool to mystify the roots of 'crime', the causes of crime etc. but as a device to whip everyone else into line, as it were, for the plain truth of the matter is that the bullshit about criminality arising from some deep psychological disturbance - as Fanon says: (not!) from some mysterious organization of the nervous system... is just that, bullshit, but powerful smelling stuff which has caused the criminal class to be regarded by many of the working population in terms of apartheid - this when the sociological truth is that 99% of the people who are classified as the criminal fraternity, the criminal subculture, come from the working masses, out of the most depressed areas, and that the causes of crime are economic, social and psychological exploitation and deprivation, and anyone who doesn't start off with this fact when involving themselves with any thought about prisons, criminals, crime etc. and persists in subscribing to the view that criminality does stem from some mysterious organization of the nervous system, and subscribes to the whole woolly quasi-medical bullshit is either woefully misled and/or displaying class prejudice, their bourgeoisie is showing. The point is not at all whether prison officers are to be turnkeys or therapists - they are turnkeys and they are not at all in any shape mentally or motivationally or socially to adopt the most cursory quasi-medical - therapeutic (manner?) - the point is: when is the sociological fact above going to be recognized and acted upon by liberals, reformers and government. One thing is

certain: as long as they refuse to recognize the truth, they are helping to maintain the corrupt status quo, reinforce the whole and utterly false law and order brigade's hysterical outpourings, and reinforce the causes of crime and obscure the whole issue, thereby increasing the poverty, the injustice, the brutality, the indignities, the humiliations which are the make-up of 'criminality'. The fact is, also, that the causes of crime are political, in the fullest sense of the word; the law is a political agency, the most powerful in this formal democracy (or pre-fascist state, if you like); all crimes are political and all prisoners political prisoners. That is something which, if no liberal reformer likes to admit it, prisoners have recognized instinctively (say at the age of eleven, sitting in court for the first time, charged with stealing - what - a box of paints from a shop, watching the legal system in motion; one knows instinctively what a conspiracy really is, one sees it, feels it, one's class instincts shout it), and many prisoners and families, friends, are coming to understand the roots of the matter and to act upon it.

BRUTALITY

In writing about prisons brutality inevitably gets mentioned a lot. It is difficult not to pick it out of all the rest and give it more importance than it has. That does not mean that it must somehow be played down or that it is not important, just that I find it difficult to get the right balance, to put it somewhere near the part it plays. Thus in Gartree there is not so much actual brutality by guards against prisoners - as compared with Wandsworth say. The incidents mentioned earlier being fairly isolated and not as savage as some which have occurred. Its relevance is in the context of 'violence in prison' - the whole mythology of mad criminals attacking defenceless (and ever so sane) prison officers. It's not that there are not some guards who get 'violently attacked' but 99% of all incidents (there are not so many as the media portray; that's part of what I mean by try to get the right balance) happen when some prisoner has suffered a series of indignities over a period of years, never saying anything in retaliation, until one day the guard says something, does something, the prisoner

throws a punch, or if lucky or quick, two. This does happen to a defenceless warder. But what happens to the prisoner? He's set upon by guards running at the sound of the alarm from all over the prison, dragged down to the punishment block, kicked, punched and hit with truncheons on the way and thrown into a cell where the guards kick him senseless - or where they 'restrain' him in the official jargon. The next morning he is charged with assault and put before the visiting magistrates. He faces them without any legal representation, the hearings are held in secret, and with no right of appeal. After being 'tried' he usually gets sentenced to something like 56 days solitary confinement, 120 days loss of remission, 15 days bread and water. Beside this, remember that only one prison guard has been killed in the last 30-40 years. A prison guard's insurance rating is lower than most, lower than postmen, engineers, etc.



REFORM - 'COMMUNITY SERVICE' ETC. ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON

The latest government moves on prisons - 'prison reform' as it's called - are the moves to start more 'alternatives to prison'. It is surely obvious that this latest 'reform' means as much as all the other reforms that have been since the first British prison was built; one look at it shows that it will mean little or nothing. The numbers of people who are given this alternative to a prison sentence will be small indeed - and I expect that the magistrates operating this reform will work it quite arbitrarily, by still sending everyone they always would to prison, whilst picking out some first offenders and people they would otherwise have given suspended sentences, probation or fines. Look at this reform in the cold light of some 400 young men, boys really, all en route to borstals all over the country, trudging round and round an exercise yard a third of the size of a football pitch, surrounded by steel fences topped with barbed wire, numerous uniformed warders, some with guard dogs, closed-circuit TV cameras constantly swivelling on them, and the guards shouting at them and herding them round and round. Compare them with a group of prisoners exercising in Newgate prison some 150 years ago, and think of the history of prison and the way the state has exercised its hysterical punitive obsession, and think of this 'reform'; why it's an insult to human intelligence, it's an insult even to liberals and reformers. Of course these liberals thrive on insults of this kind; they welcome them as if they were cataclysmic revolutions; it's disgusting. It's people like them who tend the causes of violence, then moralise on violence.

Bike.

A drawing from life of William Morris, a 55-year-old mental patient found in one of the cells of Bethlem Hospital, London, in May 1814 by Edward Wakefield. He had remained riveted in irons and strapped to the wall by 12-inch chains for 10 years. He was released within weeks of his discovery, but died within the year

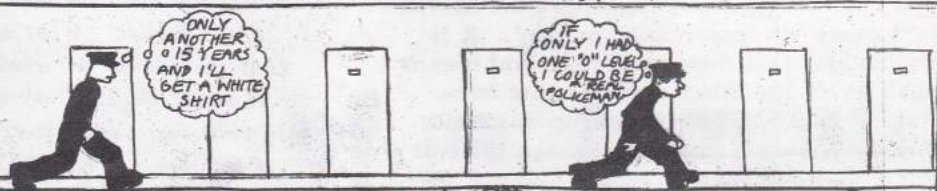
*A is Authority, waving its stick,
B are the Bars, resembling a "nick,"
C is the Cage, against which I kick,
D are the Drugs, which make me sick.
E are the Eyes, for ever upon one,
F the Feeling "What have I done?"
G is the Gloom, the whole place pervading,
H is the Hope, in my mind, oft' invading,
I—well, that's I; no more to be said,
J ust that I often wish I were dead;
K is the Knowledge stored in my head,
L earned while on the psychiatrist's "bed."
M for Monotony—day in day out,
N for Nurses—God! how they shout!
O is a Circle—no end or beginning,
P is my Patience, to which I'm just clinging.
Q is the Quiet, which I find in my room,
R is the Rainbow, hidden by gloom.
S—"Schizophrenic;" write that on my tomb,
T is the Terrible feeling of doom.
U—it's quite Useless to voice a complaint.
V oices; that's when you hear what ain't.
W—Will-power, in me, sadly lacking.
X—"Mr. Anonymous," no front and no backing,
Y—that's You—you're in on this too,
Zealously guarded in Broadmoor Zoo.*



THE TURN OF THE SCREW

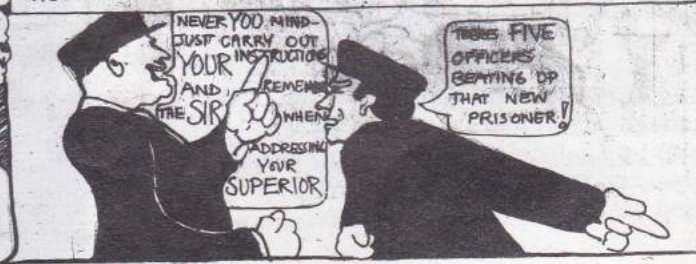
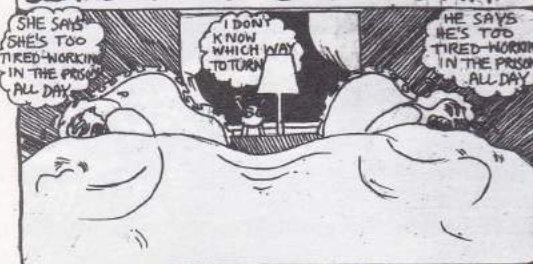


MONDAY MORNING AND JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE NICK...

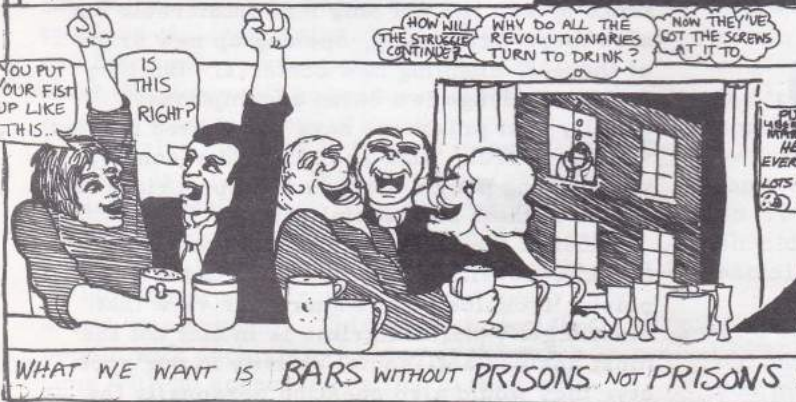


AT NIGHT THEY PAID THE PENALTY FOR THEIR BLAND DISREGARD FOR THE LAW....

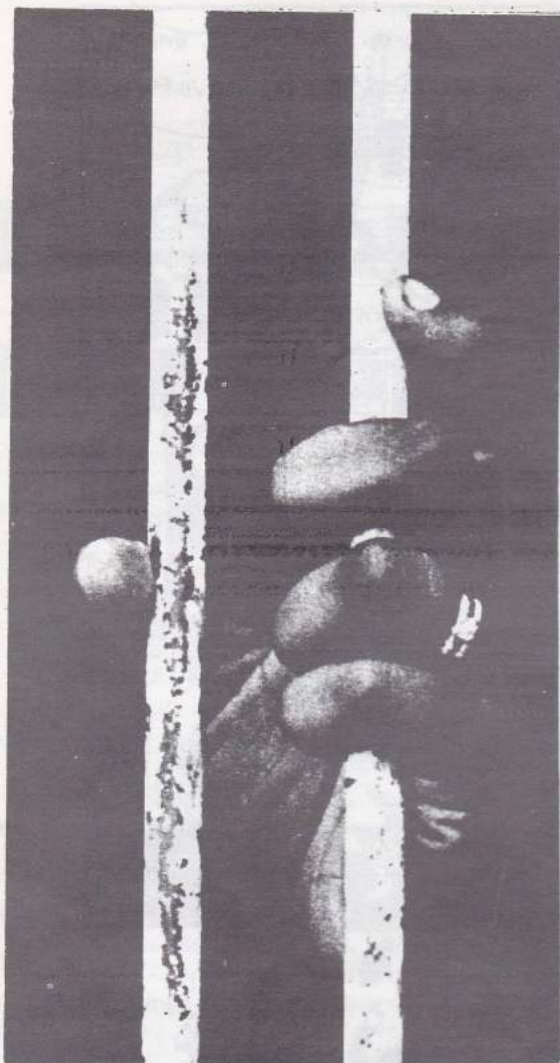
NOT THAT THEY WERE BADLY TREATED !



VISITORS WERE COMPASSIONATELY ALLOWED....



WHAT WE WANT IS BARS WITHOUT PRISONS NOT PRISONS WITHOUT BARS!



THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

how prison abolition can help

We want unity of all groups on the libertarian left, but can't resolve amongst ourselves the contradiction between reform and abolition of the prisons. Some argue for PROP (Preservation of the Rights of Prisoners) on two levels: that whilst there are prisons, there must be better conditions and more rights; and that by struggling for these, prisoners will raise their consciousness and progress to wider issues. Others stress the importance of transcending the prison concept, postulating alternatives to prison both in the present time and in a future better society where there will presumably always be some degree of anti-social behaviour.

These outlooks are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but for practical reasons one has to choose one or the other. It is a mammoth job to effect any changes in the prisons from inside or from outside. Recently, some changes have been made; for example, visits at Brixton prison are now 'open' (whereas before, visitors had to talk through glass barriers) and men in Wandsworth, one of the worst prisons, may have two visits a month instead of one. Brixton men can now have a radio in their cell. These come after much publicity and agitation about conditions inside - such activity is not futile. Hundreds of prisoners have certainly expanded their view of what is possible through their own efforts. For a few of them this realisation will affect their lives after release - they may choose to work full-time at social action related to prison or other problematic social institutions.

So the agitation in itself can be useful - indeed, the only immediate action for people still inside - but how significant are the actual gains won? Certainly radios, visits, letters, educational classes and so on all can make prison life not only less intolerable but also more interesting, opening up new areas of thought, enabling new contacts. But they do not challenge two basic assumptions: firstly, that prisoners have committed crimes which are truly 'anti-social', and secondly, that locking people away is an appropriate reaction to their anti-social acts.

Most of the people prominent (certainly outside, possibly inside as well) in the 1972 prison 'troubles' would share our view that most legally-defined crime is in fact not the most serious anti-social activity in our society; they would also question personally the

validity of prison for most people. In fact one of the clauses of the PROP Charter of 1972 called for the eventual abolition of prison. Nevertheless, their main energies have been supporting and encouraging men inside to fight for rights, rather than publicly questioning why they are inside at all. They are concerned with the here and now, with people's actual situations, and with the actual prisons of tomorrow which they argue, quite rightly unfortunately, will still be with us even if numbers go down.

Alongside this important struggle it is also vital that the other view is developed and implemented. This can be justified on at least two different grounds. First, it is not necessary that people now should have to undergo the destructive prison experience, especially when many of them have undergone many other destructive experiences in their lives and may be even less able than strong, well-balanced people to escape prison's effects.

It is not as though prison inevitably radicalises people, that by depriving someone of the unique prison experience we are lessening the chances that he will emerge as a revolutionary! This view is largely eyewash. Although it must be pointed out that many (probably an increasing number) are learning important lessons about this society and how to change it through what they meet inside, most people in our experience do not glean this knowledge at all, even if they feel personally embittered over their own case. It is well known that some of the most reactionary and authoritarian attitudes are amply represented in prison. Feelings about sex offenders, to give the most extreme example, are almost 100% punitive - punitive being too mild a word. On the whole prisoners would like to see men who rape, murder or even touch up children tortured, mutilated and so on, before they are finally killed. By contrast the Home Office policy of isolating such offenders seems almost benign!

It is also common to hear prisoners claim that life is a jungle, that they deserve to be punished because they have done wrong, that the death penalty should be restored for various crimes (even though there was always such a vigorous protest from prisoners every time a man was hanged). This is not to say that people with such views cannot at the same time with no apparent conflict in their own minds fight militantly for better conditions

and rights. It is just to attempt to describe the reality of prison ideology as we have found it, in order to dispel any over-romantic notions. It is also to build up a case against imprisoning people at all, for by providing alternatives to prison of the right kind and of a nature which changes as needs change, we can probably effect more true change in society.

The first main reason for advocating abolition, then, is that it is doubtful whether prisons will ever be justified in terms of the degree of radicalisation possible through them (just as the Schools Action Union gets support from so few children) - on the contrary, such an unpleasant and harmful experience which leads nowhere should be made impossible, and it is only because we all condone it by default that it is allowed to continue. Obviously it is a handy sanction to be wielded about by the ruling class and therefore is hard to abolish and replace with libertarian schemes, but some headway can be made, and we can only discover how much by trying.

The second justification for retiring from the 'reform the prisons' fight is that 'extreme' concepts have always been important and necessary to the evolution of ideas. Morris' 'News from Nowhere' and other utopias - these surely have inspired many a thinker who needs such models of what life could be like. Bugged down in contemporary details, we all lose a little sight of a new social order. So by extending the libertarian tradition of suggesting alternative structures or non-structures to the field of prison, we are keeping alive ideas of alternative approaches to people who have been convicted.

Naturally this begs one of the most important questions of all: what do we consider as crime? a question answered eloquently by Angela Davis in her famous statement about the 'real criminals' of this society. If, the argument often goes, we regard petty stealing or even more major 'crimes' as mere symptoms of a rotten social order, why waste time on 'reforming' the culprits, good energy which should be channeled towards transforming that social order?

The object of an alternative to prison from our point of view is to aid survival of the person in question. Thus it would teach skills which are necessary to this end: how to earn

a living, how to find a place to live, how to claim one's rights, how to avoid unnecessary trouble, how to make good relationships, how to use one's time to satisfaction. None of these skills need be taught in an authoritarian way, nor be imposed where they were not wanted, nor need they detract from the person's individuality. Quite otherwise - they would give him or her new confidence, the ability to control his life more, the key to doing what he wants to do (assuming that he does not want to spend all his life in institutions). Unlike prison, such an alternative would not punish but aid. It would not carry stigma, but enhance status.



Prison visiting in the 1860's. Nowadays visitors are separated by wired glass and screwed down chairs are provided - progress it appears is slow.

The actual daily arrangement of these schemes would be variable - either nightly programmes, or residential, or weekend courses, or once a week sessions. It would depend on the individual's circumstances, his degree of need, his interest. At present the government is setting up 'day training centres' to teach some of these skills - their success is likely to be less than potential precisely because they will be hampered by red tape. But schemes run by informal groups and individuals could be far more flexible and attractive. There is no reason to think that

some courts and some probation officers would not be willing to use them, even if many magistrates and judges still insist on their pound of flesh.

The second object of an alternative is consciously to aid people who are interested in the transformation of society. Do we have the right to persuade someone who doesn't want to know to become an activist? As stated earlier, many prisoners have too many problems which they feel are purely personal, or ideologically are too conservative to have much interest in anything besides finding themselves a secure home, perhaps a nuclear family and a means



of income. Although we can see why they want these things exclusively, and have a right to offer some alternatives or additions, it smacks of the fascist groups of both right and 'left' to attempt to interfere. Over and above such people there are many thousands - including young people - who are both dissatisfied with their own lives in all respects and also aware at some level that social change is a prerequisite of their own fulfilment. We are concerned about alternatives to prison largely because of the hope which this situation gives rise to. These are people who may

return to penal institutions (from approved school onwards) time after time, not because they fully want to (although it is quite common for people to manoeuvre themselves back to prison when the outside world becomes too strenuous) nor because they feel dedicated to a 'life of crime' but because very simply they have not found any alternatives for themselves on any level.

Looked at this way, alternatives to prison aim to work with people towards an alternative life style, so far as this is possible in present conditions. Many people want to stop working with things (which for working class people usually means mindless, monotonous jobs) and work with people instead, but they lack the formal qualifications for straight jobs, and need an income from somewhere if they want to work full-time in organisations which have no money to pay them. So an immediate problem is to enable people to find satisfying work which at the same time keeps them alive. This would consolidate in a tiny way some change of values in society represented by a prisoner's realisation that what makes him happy is relating to other people and not acquiring more wealth. If he does not find opportunities to practice these new values, he may cynically return by default to his former ones; eventually the law may catch up with him (especially if he has a record of course) and his recidivist career is reconfirmed.

We would also argue that psychotherapeutic techniques can have the same liberating results as teaching survival skills, as opening up new careers and opportunities for self-expression. We are all in the prison of our repressions and other childhood left-overs; methods which can free us to any extent by definition lead us where we want to go, to positions of greater choice. People in prison often act compulsively, for reasons they do not understand. Those who commit impulsive violent crimes often claim, 'I don't know what came over me, I couldn't stop myself.' If people are helped out of their mental prisons they may be more able to stay out of the concrete ones. There is not necessarily a contradiction in having a basically socio-economic analysis of an individual's problems while at the same time seeing a partial solution to those problems through psychological means; often outer circumstances make a deep scar

in the mind, and the scar is then the main problem, remaining there even if objective conditions change dramatically.



If it is relatively easy to define our position about the majority of prisoners, it is hard to come to a conclusion about the people who have 'chosen' crime as a career, and those who are a serious danger to other people's lives. The former group's life style can be seen as a caricature of capitalist morality - injure or kill if need be in pursuit of wealth, take where you can as long as you don't get caught (the morality is often superior to capitalists', since many professional criminals have strict rules about who they steal from!). We cannot pretend that this is not a problem, if only because whatever society we aim for, we will need a policy for confronting people who persist in harming other people, however we define 'harm'. If we occupy a factory tomorrow, what do we do to the ex-owner who returns with bailiffs? If we establish a commune for work and living, how do we react when someone embezzles (while money still remains!) or tears the place to pieces? By influencing today's attitudes towards 'law-breakers', we hope to also influence tomorrow's reactions to anti-social acts.

Most of us defend the necessity for locking up some of the second group - those who are repeatedly violent - because we respect other people's right to go on living uninjured rather than their right to own property. There are inherent problems in locking up, needless to say, and we are not confident that a system can be worked out in practice that helps its prisoners (which is what any locked institution contains) to the maximum in order to release

them to totally free or supervised conditions as soon as possible. This is one of the areas where there is no obvious solution. Public attitudes are important here - the more sympathetic interest in our social casualties, the less need for institutions. But how to develop this interest?

When we set up Radical Alternatives to Prison in 1970 we had a lot of work to do in getting clear our own philosophy and methods, and this task still goes on. The test of how far our ideas can be applied in the present state of affairs will, we hope, be within the next two years around one London court, where we plan to find alternatives for every individual who is likely to go to prison or borstal. We need help with this, as with our other projects which cover the problems of mothers in prison, property offenders, the 'mentally ab-

normal' offender, and young 'offenders'. We also go out speaking to groups, to which we like to send ex-prisoners, we write for various papers, and attempt in other ways to influence people. If you want to know more, please contact us at 104 Newgate Street, London EC1 or telephone 01-600-4793.

Recent events have brought home to us how thin is the dividing line between who goes to prison and who stays out. The interest in prisons and prisoners has therefore increased greatly. The next step is to link prisons with the other repressive institutions (schools, factories, mental hospitals, old people's homes, tight nuclear families etc.) and see that far from wanting people to accept the institutions, we need to envisage a network instead where people from all social groups can work together and do without alien authorities.

Vicky Tudor



VORKUTA

TWENTY YEARS ON



VORKUTA is about 1,000 kilometres from Moscow by rail. It lies just within the Arctic Circle, in the tundra belt, and 400 kilometres south of the island of Novaya Zemlya. The river Vorkuta is a right-side tributary of the Pechora, a much longer and larger river which flows northwards into the Yugorsky Strait.

The town of Vorkuta is a few kilometres to the north of the river. It is just within the so-called Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, in the extreme northeast of the Russian SFSR.

To the south and east of the river Vorkuta are the northernmost heights of the Urals mountains. And further to the east lie the poorly-developed, almost unpopulated, expanses of northern Siberia. Vorkuta has no outlet to the sea - that is the Barents Sea - which is frozen up for ten months of the year anyway. The town, however, is linked to the world outside by a railway line which, during the 'Great Patriotic War' of 1941-45, was connected to the Arkhangelsk-Vologda Railroad, by way of Kotlas.

Owing to the remoteness of the northeast of the Russian SFSR from the Atlantic Ocean, with its warm Gulf Stream currents, the climate there is much more extreme than in the northwest of the region in the Kola Peninsula. Indeed, the severity of the climate increases in a northeastern direction, from Vologda to Pechora, and from Pechora to Vorkuta.

Neither trees nor bushes grow in the tundra. During the two summer months of July and August the ground thaws for a few metres in depth, and becomes muddy and swampy. And the flies and mosquitoes attack all living creatures. By the beginning of September, the ground freezes again and the long Polar Night begins. Once again,

Vorkuta is a black, icy Hell. Indeed, when the Spanish revolutionary general, Valentine González, was sent there in January 1946, he noted that the barometer read minus 85°C. Under such conditions, it is impossible to be out-of-doors unless completely covered, otherwise frost-bitten limbs will have to be amputated. Many are! No man alone can survive when the fierce snowstorms sweep the tundra. For more than 100 days the khanovey, the 'wind of winds', blows across the frozen wastes of Hell.

When Czar Nicholas the First's advisers suggested that he should make the areas around the rivers Pechora and Vorkuta into colonies for political prisoners, he sent for a report of the conditions there; but after due consideration, he decided that it was 'too much to demand of any man that he should live there!'. No one, except a few reindeer breeders and hunters from the Nentsi tribe, could live or work there of his own free will, said the Czar.

But Czar Nicholas did not know what lay beneath the icy wastes of the Pechora basin, and to the north of the Vorkuta river. But Czar Joseph Stalin, Great and Wise Leader of All Russia, did.

It all started in 1929, when a Russian expedition went to the northern part of what was then the Autonomous Komi Province. It worked under the auspices of the GPU which, later, played an important role in the area described as the Ukhta-Pechora Region. The expedition returned home with comprehensive data about oil and coal. It had discovered in the region of the Pechora river the existence of a 'Polar Donets Basin' of gigantic proportions. Subsequent expeditions, during the First Five Year Plan, discovered coal deposits at thirty points of the vast Ukhta-Pechora Region. And Leningrad needed coal.

Of course, people were required to dig that coal. Here the People of the Underworld would have to toil. In 1932, the Soviet Government formed the Ukhta-Pechora Trust. At the same time, the Polar Commission of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR began to work out a detailed plan to transform the region into a mining and industrial district, and into a fuel base for the Leningrad industry. The Plan specified that the number of inhabitants of the area concerned, which was less than 50,000 at the time, was to increase to 168,000 by 1942, and over 500,000 by 1947. First, work would have to begin on the Northern Pechora Railway Line. It was not, however, finished until 1942.

* * *

SOVIET Russia was about to enter her era of capital accumulation,* and as any good Marxist will tell you, the accumulation of capital requires cheap, unskilled labour - lots of it. Furthermore, Russia needed people in places where people did not wish to go. Vorkuta needed labour. So, labour had to be found. And who better than the GPU to provide it?

In the autumn of 1929, prison labour became a subject of economic planning. At a conference of high prison officials in October of that year, it was declared that 'The Five Year Plan requires tasks involving a great demand for unskilled labour. Local conditions sometimes present serious obstacles to the recruitment of labour. It is here that the places of confinement, having at their disposal excess labour in great quantities and engaged in production near the places of confinement, can come to the assistance of those economic enterprises which experience a labour shortage.'

The conference then adopted the following resolution:

'The Chiefs of the Administrative Districts of the Ural Region, the Northern Region, and the NKVD of Karelia must at an early date provide for the organisation of timber collecting colonies... etc.'

In 1930, the various planning agencies of the Soviet Union received instructions to

'incorporate the work performed by those deprived of liberty into the planned economy of the country, and into the Five Year Plan'. Forced 'corrective' labour became an all-important and growing factor in the economic development of the USSR and, in particular, in those regions such as Vorkuta where insufficient 'free' wage-labour was obtainable. The GPU established a new department, the GULAG (Chief Administration of Camps), which was set up as the central agency of a vast network of Labour Camps. During the first Five Year Plan, however, the work performed in these camps did not always appear under either GPU or GULAG in the official reports.

Actual development of the network of Labour Camps started late in 1930 with the reorganisation of the Northern Camps of Special Designation. From Solovetski (where Lenin and Trotsky sent the anarchists, Social Revolutionaries and Kronstadt rebels) they soon spread back to the mainland of Siberia. At the same time that the agriculture, fisheries and brickyards of the Solovetski camps were being expanded, phosphates were mined at Khibinski, oil drilling and coal mining had begun in the Ukhta Region and, first, railroad construction and then road making and, finally, coal mining was carried out at the Vorkustroy.

Between 1935 and 1940, throughout the Great Purge, large numbers of 'intellectuals', scientists, physicians and engineers had been arrested, all of whom were utilised by GULAG for the fulfillment of the Plan and the State's economic and strategic requirements. Many Labour Camp networks underwent considerable expansion. The camp system at the Pechora River became so large that it had to be split into two separate systems - the Ukhta and the Pechora. A new city, Chibyu-Ukhta, became the capital of the NKVD administration. Oil wells sprang up at Ukhta, a great electric power station was built nearby, the railway lines were completed from Kotlas to Chibyu-Ukhta and from Chibyu-Ukhta to Ust-Kozhva, and coal mining was in 'full swing' at Vorkuta. Between 1940 and 1942, when many Poles were released and sent to the Middle East, there were about 900,000 People of the Underworld toiling - for the

glory of the Soviet State and the benefit of its rulers - in the area.

The growing extraction of coal soon gave rise to the town and administrative centre of Vorkuta, with a population - in 1948 - of about 80,000 souls, of whom some were 'free' (they were only wage-slaves!), but most were unfree. The People of the Underworld built the town, and the railway which now reaches it. Vorkuta has a large railroad station, where the blue carriages of the Moscow Express can be seen in the sidings. It has fine wide avenues, some huge Soviet and other administrative buildings, some of which - as long ago as 1950 - were slowly sinking into the ground because their foundations had not been dug deep enough. Vorkuta also has large, bright, street lamps and, of course, workers' apartments and many little wooden bungalows. A few kilometres to the north of the town there is an immense marshalling yard, from where the coal trains leave for Leningrad and elsewhere. And twenty kilometres to the north of Vorkuta are the first of the coal fields - and, until fairly recent times, the labour camps. They are just little specks of light piercing the Eternal Darkness of Hell.

* * *

IT IS any day between, say, 1941 and 1956....

The bolts on the iron grilles of the - human - cattle trucks were drawn back. The train had arrived in Hell. It was Vorkuta - the end of the line. The prisoners climbed down and were marched off, in fives, to the peresilka, the transit or halfway camp. Escorted by ten guards with balalaika machine-guns and soldiers with dogs, they arrived at the gate of the peresilka. It was covered with barbed wire. One by one, as their names were called out, the prisoners entered the camp. They would be there from one to three weeks before being sent to the various camps for the mines....

There are between thirty and forty pits, and thirty camps of which thirteen are reserved for mainly political prisoners, and are called Special Camps. Whilst the camps are controlled and administered by the NKVD, coal production and the mines themselves are controlled by the Ministry (formerly Commissariat) of Coal Production. Most of the

camps are fairly near to the pits. Discipline in the ordinary 'criminal' camps is not all that strict; the situation in the Special Camps, however, is another matter. The régime is strict.

Each camp has between twenty and twenty-five huts, with about 150 to 160 prisoners in each. The huts are heated by a single stove in the middle. For sanitation, there are buckets which are emptied first thing in the morning. There are at least three barbed wire fences surrounding each camp; and between the fences there are usually four or five guard dogs. Every camp has a watch tower at each corner. Searchlights are mounted on each tower, and they are manned by one guard during the day and two at night. There is only one entrance/exit gate.

Only a small proportion of the inmates of the camps are 'criminals', even in the generally accepted sense of the word. Most are 'saboteurs' - a word that can cover almost any anti-State activity or conversation. Being late for work on a number of occasions is sabotage! Criticising the Government is also sabotage. Captured Soviet soldiers and citizens who had been taken to Germany during the 'Great Patriotic War', and who had willingly or unwillingly co-operated with the Germans, were arrested and sent to the camps in large numbers after the end of the war. Some of them are former Vlasovites.¹ Most of them have



Today at home, Long Kesh
concentration camp

been sentenced to twenty or twenty-five years 'deprivation'. Vorkuta is a veritable disunited nations....

Before the war, many of the prisoners at Vorkuta, as elsewhere, were often political opponents of Stalinism. In 1937, for example, there were a considerable number of Zinovievites and Trotskyists, including Trotsky's own son, Sergei Sedov. The old Bolshevik, Safarev of Leningrad, was another who was still alive in Vorkuta in 1940. But from 1941 onwards the situation, the numbers, and the type of prisoners changed. We are concerned with the year 1953....

The Russians are in a minority. The Ukrainians are numerically the strongest. They comprise about two-thirds of the camp population. Many are from the Western Ukraine and the Lvov area, which was part of Poland until the Russian invasion in 1939. Others come from Carpatho-Ukraine. The number of Eastern Ukrainians is small, as the Soviet State has been established there since the crushing of the Makhnovisti.² There are, however, a few Makhnovist remnants at Vorkuta. But many of the Ukrainians are supporters of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists or Banderists,³ the Ukrainian Insurgent Army which fought both the Germans and the Red Army during the 'Great Patriotic War'. Generally, they hate all 'Great' Russians. The Ukrainians are also in a majority in the three women's camps at Vorkuta.

The next largest group comprises the Balts from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There are also numbers of Germans, Georgians, Armenians, Rumanians and various other nationalities. The Germans and Rumanians are largely Nazis. The Russians in the camps are not very popular, as many of them, despite their imprisonment, remain convinced Communists. The few Jews are also not very popular, and are sometimes persecuted, because unfortunately many Russians and Ukrainians are traditionally anti-Jewish, and in recent years have been influenced by the reactionary propaganda of the German Nazis. Moreover, the Jews are generally former Stalinist bureaucrats who have fallen foul of the State.

Such are the People of the Underworld.

* * *

IN MARCH, 1953, Stalin died. His death was welcomed by most of the People of the Underworld. Many expected the régime to collapse. There was widespread opposition to the bureaucratic State Capitalism of the Communists. The slogan 'Land to the Peasants' had been a gigantic fraud. The peasants' hatred of Stalinism, particularly after forced collectivisation, was as great as it had been towards Czarism; and the proletariat were not free, and they knew it. But more important, was the hatred of the various national minorities, particularly the Ukrainians and the Balts. The People of the Underworld had been waiting for the day that Stalin died. Now he was gone.

Although the opposition was widespread, it was unfortunately uncoordinated and largely unorganised, except in the camps, and in them only among the West Ukrainians. Of course, the resistance movements within the camps, including Vorkuta, had worked out plans for such an eventuality as Stalin's death or an insurrection elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Limited by geography, each camp however had already laid its plans. But their plans were limited to the confines of the Vorkuta area. All the same, they were well aware that prisoners in camps throughout the Soviet Union had much the same ideas and plans. The moving of prisoners from one area to another confirmed that.

For about two years the prisoners' living conditions had been improving. The Soviet government had been forced by economic necessity. There was, owing to the high death rate, a chronic shortage of labour. In 1952, wages were introduced for the first time. Miners fulfilling their 'norm' earned 300 roubles a month (at that period the rouble was only worth a few pennies). However, many of the prisoners received no wages at



all. Most of the posts were unpaid; and brigades working on building sites only earned about 100 roubles a month. All the same, canteen facilities did improve. The authorities also introduced better clothing. And some of the camp blocks were re-built. Indeed, all the living quarters built after about 1950 were far superior to those built previously. Books circulated, and there was even a theatre group. Football teams were formed, and some matches were played between camps in the Vorkuta area. Furthermore, the People of the Underworld no longer starved to death.

On June 17, 1953, the workers of East Berlin and East Germany went on strike. The people of Vorkuta soon heard about it. But they did not act immediately. It is, however, wrong to assume that nothing happened in the Soviet labour camps until after the news of Stalin's death. A long time before his death, insurrections had broken out elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In 1946, there had been a small uprising in Kolyma, followed by another in 1947. There were other isolated strikes and insurrections in a number of camps between 1948 and 1953. May, 1953, saw a spate of strikes: three days in Kingir, and another in Kolyma. Possibly the most important - and bloody - was the strike at Norilsk, which commenced on May 7, and ended on August 11 with a bloody massacre of many of the prisoners.

At the beginning of June there was an insurrection in Karaganda, organised by former members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. This was soon put down, but as Vorkuta was now desperate for labour, the NKVD Central Office in Moscow decided to send many of the Ukrainians - most of whom before the uprising had been living under semi-free conditions - to the Vorkuta mines. In fact, many of the Karagandans 'volunteered' to go to Vorkuta, not knowing what conditions were really like, and having been promised better pay than they got even in the 'free' settlements of the Karaganda regions. When they arrived, they were merely sent to the usual Special Camps. Their living conditions were no better than those of the other prisoners of Vorkuta. Immediately they refused to start work in the pits. But unlike the majority of Vorkuta prisoners, they at least were fairly free to move about the different Vorkuta camps. They, therefore, began agitating among the

prisoners to join them. They received a sympathetic hearing, with many of the older, long-stay, prisoners declaring their solidarity. The prisoners - mainly Ukrainians, but including many other nationalities - began to organise. They elected secret committees in a number of camps.

* * *

THE AIM was to bring all coal mining to a standstill throughout the Vorkuta area, and so bring industrial production to a halt in Leningrad, where most of the coal at that time was being sent. On the night of July 19/20, the strike began at Camp (mine) No. 7 and at Pit No. 1, where over 8,000 miners refused to go to work. At Camp No. 7 neither the miners nor the brigades of building workers went to work. The strike soon spread to Camps Nos. 14/16 and Camp No. 29. Camps Nos. 9/10 and No. 6 joined the strike. About three days later Pit No. 40 struck. Not all the camps went on strike, but within a week scores of thousands of the People of the Underworld were refusing to go down the pits or to work on the various construction sites. Strike committees had been formed throughout the camp network. And demands were now being put forward to the Camp authorities.

Each strike committee put forward slightly different demands. All, however, demanded the quashing, or at least the reduction, of sentences. Some demanded re-trials, or reviews of trials. Others demanded that the prisoners be allowed to settle among the 'free' population - but at the same time, remain in the Vorkuta area. Indeed, many of the strikers were prepared to continue working in the pits until the production of coal was put on an entirely different basis - by securing voluntary labour from elsewhere in the Soviet Union if this was possible, making mining in the area attractive by establishing better working conditions and much higher wages and, of course, mechanising the mines. The building brigade workers of Camp No. 7, who were ordered to return to work by the guards on the second day of the strike, stated that they would not return until all the barbed wire was removed from around their camp. Members of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists made more political demands. They called for the withdrawal of Soviet Russians from the Ukraine and other non-Russian ter-

ritories within the borders of the USSR, the liberation of all innocent prisoners, the cessation of mass-arrests, the revision of all sentences and the improvement of conditions within the camps.

Immediately after the start of the strike in Camp No. 7, the authorities issued the following notice to all Special Camps in the Vorkuta area:

- 1) Prisoners will no longer be locked in at night;
- 2) Bars in front of all windows are to be removed;
- 3) Numbers worn on the left arm and right knee of all clothing are to be removed;
- 4) Every prisoner will be entitled to write one letter a month to his family;
- 5) With permission of the officer in charge of all camps at Vorkuta, all prisoners whose work and conduct is considered satisfactory may, on application to, and with the approval of, the Commandant of their camp, receive one visit a year from members of their family;
- 6) Every prisoner has the right to address applications for the revision of interrogation and trial proceedings to the Chairman of the Special Commission from Moscow, General Masslennikov.

The prisoners began to pull the hinges off the heavy iron bars which were laid across the doors of their huts at night. Bars were wrenched off the windows, and the numbers torn from their clothes.

The NKVD also took another important step. It attempted to isolate all the camps from each other. Transfers were stopped at once. Brigades were forbidden to leave their respective camps. The NKVD then tried to deceive the striking prisoners by giving the impression that different camps had resumed work. For instance, in Camp No. 6 they let empty trucks go on running between the pit-head and the slag-heap for three days after the strike had begun, so that all the camps within range of the mine would think that the pit was still working. Some of the prisoners were 'arrested' and taken to isolated cells in the main prison block of Camp No. 1. Repressive measures were particularly stepped up at Camp No. 11. Military precautions were taken against all the camps on strike. Sol-

diers in the Special Reserve at Vorkuta stood in readiness. Machine-guns and mortars were set up outside the camps.

Within a few days, a **commission** of inquiry, **consisting** of about **thirty** Army and NKVD **officers**, arrived **from** Moscow. It had no powers to act, but it took many statements in great detail. The commission worked about eight days - whilst the strike was in progress - and then flew away again!

* * *

FOLLOWING the return of the commission, events took a dramatic turn at Camp No. 29. At that camp, not only did the prisoners go on strike, but they held a public meeting. They then went to the Commandant, and informed him that the prisoners, through their elected committee, were taking over control of the camp and the pit and would run them themselves. They demanded the withdrawal of all NKVD men. The Commandant, to the surprise of many of the inmates, conceded to their demands. The committee organised their own security 'police', who released all the prisoners who were in the bur⁴ for various offences and locked up a number of notorious informers - for their own safety! The committee made a thorough survey of the camp's food supplies, and decided that they had enough for about four weeks at a somewhat increased ration.

Camp No. 29 made much the same general demands as all the other camps, but like Camp No. 7, their strike committee refused to confer with the local NKVD authorities. They demanded to deal directly with the plenipotentiary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or with a member of the government. The Commandant, General Dervianko, attempted to speak to the prisoners at a public meeting in the camp, but he was shouted down. He made yet another attempt, but it was to no avail. It merely improved the strikers' morale.

In the meantime, the camp was surrounded by machine-gun posts and by military formations in battle order. Large numbers of trucks, filled with troops, moved up into position. An officer called upon the prisoners to surrender through a loudspeaker. The strikers refused, saying that they would pre-

fer to die than exist as they were. They shouted: 'Go on, shoot us!' The soldiers moved forward. They battered the gate in. The prisoners were massed in front of them. The troops opened fire. Sixty-four were killed on the spot, and about 200 received injuries.

The strike, involving up to half the miners of the Vorkuta area, was almost two weeks old. But following the massacre at Camp No. 29, the other prisoners began to realise that they too would be mown down. The next day they were also delivered an ultimatum: march out of the camps and form up in the tundra, or be attacked! First, Camp No. 7 and then the rest of the camps obeyed. One by one the prisoners were made to file past their camp commandant, the head of the NKVD, his officers and many of the informers. With the assistance of the informers, the militants and strike committeemen were weeded out. Altogether, they comprised about 400 prisoners. They were loaded into trucks and driven away. Work in the pits and on the building sites began again the next day.

* * *

HAD the Vorkuta strike been a failure? Did the People of the Underworld gain anything from their rebellion?

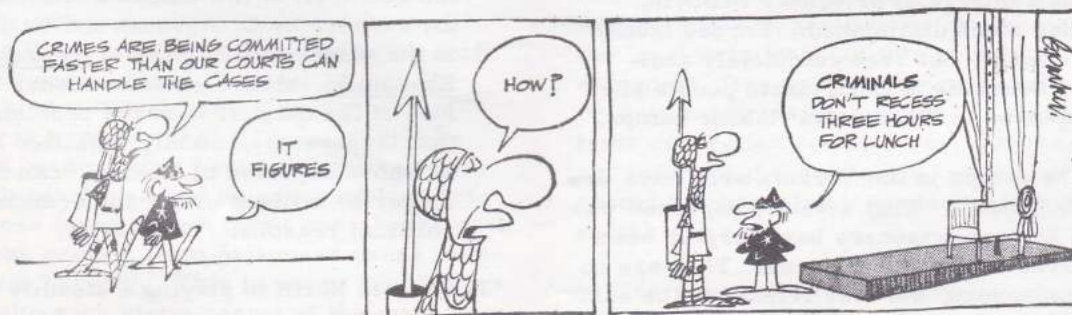
Most of the 'ringleaders' were transferred to camps in Kolyma and Kingir, where, incidentally, another insurrection broke out on May 17, 1954. This also was drowned in blood. There were demonstrations at Taishet; and at Camp No. 13, the Ukrainian-dominated committee, which included anarchists, hoisted the Black Flag over the camp for a period of time. In both 1954 and 1955, strikes broke out at Taishet.

In Vorkuta, the so-called concessions soon became a dead issue. It was quite impossible for the relatives of prisoners to travel up to 7,000 kilometres to pay a short visit to them. And of the 1,000 or so prisoners in Camp No. 6, it transpired that not one of their petitions for a revision was accepted. They all received the same reply: 'Your petition has been examined. The sentence is hereby confirmed. There is no occasion for a revision of the proceedings. After you have served your sentence, you will be released. Signed, General Rudenko, State Prosecutor-General of the USSR.'

Indeed, in 1953, it was quite impossible for the Soviet Government to abandon its system of forced 'corrective' labour, or even to modify it to meet the **strikers'** demands. The labour camps were **still essential** to the economy. To have closed them down - at a stroke - would have paralysed Soviet industry.

But the Vorkuta strike was not a complete defeat for the People of the Underworld. The strike did have some effect on supplies to Leningrad, though it did not actually disrupt the life of the city. Leningraders were quite aware that something had happened; and within a few days, railway engine-drivers on the Kotlas-Leningrad line quietly passed the news on that Vorkuta was on strike. The authorities were worried, particularly as the political state of the country following Stalin's death was still unstable; and that there might be unrest elsewhere in the country - even perhaps in Leningrad itself!

After the collapse of the strike the prisoners were naturally very despondent. Many had expected, not only that the strike would be successful, but that the very system would collapse. Other prisoners, however, felt from



the start that the strike was doomed to failure, but supported it all the same. On the credit side, the strikers had been able to organise a strike right under the noses of the NKVD. They had secretly elected their strike-committees, and had formulated their demands. The vast majority of the prisoners had never participated in a strike before in their lives. The strikers made mistakes; but that was inevitable considering the circumstances. Some of them felt that they should have gone to the pits instead of remaining in the camps, and staged sit-down strikes underground. In the pits, they said, small propaganda meetings would have been possible. All the same, as one participant remarked a few years later: 'This strike had been the first visible positive demonstration against the Government since the sailors' mutiny at Kronstadt in 1921. It had destroyed the myth that the system was unassailable.'⁵ For a while the conditions at Vorkuta remained the same. There was no general amnesty.

But as time went by, the authorities did make concessions. Numbers were permanently removed from clothes. Iron bars were removed from windows. Generally, the working-day was cut to eight hours. Prisoners were allowed to correspond more frequently with their relatives.

Furthermore, and this was as important as any so-called 'reforms', the Soviet economy, like any advancing capitalist economy, needed less unskilled labour, fewer slaves on large capital projects, and far more skilled technicians and the like. Slave-labourers of the kind 'employed' at Vorkuta were beginning to be needed in far fewer numbers. Even the Vorkuta mines were slowly becoming mechanised. They now needed highly-paid, skilled technicians and engineers.⁶ So, even by 1957, the numbers of prisoners in Soviet camps had much diminished. Forced labour has, of course, not been completely abolished. Thousands of unfortunate people are still employed in 'corrective' labour camps.

All the camps in the Vorkuta area have now been 'abolished'. What actually happened was that the former prisoners have largely been transferred into 'free' citizens. They are no longer prisoners, but they remain in the same area. They cannot move freely about the Soviet Union in search of alternative jobs.

Instead of being supervised by the NKVD, former prisoners are supervised by the civil authorities. Many of the older prisoners, invalids and women with children have now returned to their former homelands; most, however, have found life extremely difficult on their return. Some of them even went back to Vorkuta and their old comrades. Others have been released on the understanding that they go to another area - in Siberia - where there is a shortage of labour. Nevertheless, even today no one really wants to live in Hell. Vorkuta will always be 'The People of the Underworld'.

Peter E. Newell

1. During the 'Great Patriotic War', the Germans captured General Vlasov, who later on organised Russian troops to fight against the Soviet Union, on the German side.
2. Former members of Nestor Makhno's anarchist partisans who fought against the Germans, the Ukrainian nationalists, the White Guards and the 'Reds' between 1918 and 1921, throughout the Ukraine.
3. Followers of the Ukrainian nationalist leader, Stephan Bandera.
4. Solitary confinement cell.
5. Joseph Scholmer, a German prisoner, who wrote the book, Vorkuta.
6. Even at the moment of writing (1973), Soviet planners are still very much concerned with the problem of 'labour-shortages' in relation to the development, and extraction of mineral and other resources, of the Northern Regions of the country. A few extracts from a lengthy article, by G. Agranat and V. Loginov, in the winter (1972) issue of Voprosy Ekonomiki, should give the reader some idea of the magnitude of the problem now that large-scale, mainly unskilled labour of 'those deprived of liberty', can no longer be utilised either for economic or political reasons. They write:

'The Soviet North is playing a steadily increasing part as an important source of raw materials for the national economy. The ex

pansion of social production calls for ever greater quantities of raw materials, fuel and energy. There is a growing shortage of natural resources in the developed areas, and in areas which are favourable to economic development, and the State is obliged to begin developing the natural resources in areas which are more difficult of access, including the North. In those regions there are concentrated immense reserves of oil and natural gas, vast coal deposits, substantial deposits of iron and copper-nickel ores, tin, diamonds, gold, platinum, rare metals, tungsten, aluminium ores, raw materials for the production of fertilisers and considerable timber reserves and sources of hydro-power....

'The Pechora coal basin, for instance, has been playing an increasingly important part recently in providing the European part of the country with fuel....

'This large-scale expansion of the commercial use of natural resources will mean that motor roads and, particularly, railways will have to be built on an extensive scale....

'There are no big towns in the Far North of foreign countries as there are in the North of the USSR. However, the last 25 to 30 years have seen certain shifts in the development of the northern regions of foreign countries....

'In the course of developing the northern zone in the economic sphere, in addition to solving complex technical problems (such as, for instance, those of carrying out construction work in permafrost conditions, problems connected with the functioning of structures and mechanisms at low temperatures, the development of special transport facilities and the new methods for mining materials), the State has had to cope with a wide range of difficulties of an economic nature, which do not arise in other parts of the country. Moreover, the Soviet Union was not able to benefit from the experience of other countries since it was the pioneer in the large-scale development of such areas....

'In working to achieve the economic devel-

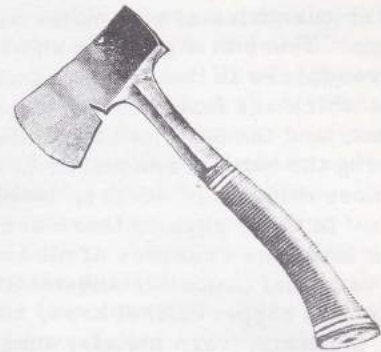
opment of its northern territories, the USSR has employed various methods. Processes which have involved the emergence of large towns and urban communities, the formation of a ramified transport network and the gradual development and entire populating of an entire territory have predominated in a number of areas, as, for instance, the Komi and Karelian Autonomous SSRs, in Central and Southern Yakutia and in the southeast of the Magadan Region....

'The large-scale use of mining and transport equipment capable of operating reliably in severe conditions will boost the level of labour productivity, and thus cut the overall input of highly-paid direct labour per unit of output. The importance of this problem was confirmed by the Directives of the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which stipulate that various types of equipment adapted so as to operate in sub-Arctic conditions ... are to be developed and put into production on a large scale....

'Among the important problems of the Northern economy is that of labour resources. The difficulty here is not only high wages and the higher cost of organising work-places as compared with developed areas, but also the seasonal nature of production (which, however, is gradually diminishing, thanks to technological progress). There is also the fact that the bulk of the population in the area stay only temporarily and it is difficult to attract personnel from other areas....

'A special problem is that of extending the training of specialists for the North at engineering and other higher educational institutions, and also of increasing the number of universities and institutes in major centres of the northern zones. Moreover, among the paramount tasks is that of creating in the North very favourable living conditions, which will compensate to some extent for the severe geographical conditions. The Directives of the 24th Congress of the CPSU and subsequent resolutions of the Party and Government call for housing and cultural facilities to be built at a rapid rate, and provide for increased wages for industrial and other workers in the North.'

The hiptrade of porn capitalism



Something needs to be said about the Nasty Tales Trial. This took place in January of this year, when Edward Barker, Paul Lewis, Mick Farren and Joy Farren (directors and secretary of Bloom Publications) were charged with "possessing obscene articles for publication for gain", that is 275 copies of Nasty Tales No. 1, an underground comic.

For too long we have either unanimously supported everyone brought to trial as being on our side against the state or if the matter was so obviously dubious, we have remained silent - "Don't kick them when they're down .. solidarity". Well solidarity is a load of bullshit if the people concerned are hip capitalists, grooving along the underground saying "Power to the People, man", in between fucks and joints. The underground paper/comic/magazine scene is something we helped create in the sixties, when it was flower power and dope and sex. When demands were made about such state shattering things as legalise pot. Fortunately it was something a lot of people passed through and saw the need for real liberation and not just a legal hallucination and a quick grope. But the hip capitalists don't get so much out of smashing capitalism, so they stayed behind with the groovers, only they changed a little - Peace isn't really so much fun when you could be fantasising over blood and gore and guts, so they threw that out, and liberation and freedom could be quite groovy too if it meant more little beauties like Honeybunch Kaminski that wonderfully liberated schoolkid. (N.B. Liberated here means that SHE suggests, "why don't we ball, screw, suck or just turn on?") When I. T. and OZ didn't satisfy the hip capitalists they came up with a solution.. "Hey man why don't we produce a comic book, only you know one for adults with lots of sex and violence in it?" So

they got together and Nasty Tales crawled onto the bookstalls with a fart and a sqwelch.

In not supporting the Nasty Tales Four, I am not joining the ranks of Mary Whitehouse and Lord Longford, no, not even Cliff Richard's nice, clean, christian fun with a song thrown in turns me on, and the "festival of light" fascists chilled my blood too. But that doesn't mean that comics full of pseudo-liberated freaks doing all sorts of "fun" things are worth producing, nor does it mean they aren't harmful to us and to the poor sods that lick their lips over them.

We have to stop letting people rip us off - we seem to understand about capitalist bosses when they have suits and ties and cigars, or in some way look like our caricature of them. Very few of us have got it together in private lifestyles to stop exploiting women; the "politically aware" lefties are still content to let women look after the kids, cook, type etc. and for the hippy woman liberation means she fucks freely with more than one man and cooks beans instead of stewing steak.

Our own naivety about only recognising the enemy when it's stamped on their forehead and the left's cop out attitude over women's liberation makes it all too easy for people like Messrs. Barker, Farren, Lewis and Farren to rip us off with their funky filth and pseudo liberation. Then when they get caught, like sheep people rally to their aid with war cries about the fascist censorship of groovy reading material.

The actual comic in question at the trial hardly seems worth either prosecuting or defending. Germaine how-to-be-a-liberated-superstar-Greer gave an intellectual defence

of the comic about how satirical it was and used long-winded phrases like repressive de-sublimation., which just goes to show you can rationalise anything, given a university degree ... all this about a nasty little comic that if it does anything at all, sells the kind of false liberation that it pretends to satirise. It shows pictures of people screwing in a very brutal manner, women being fucked and dropped out brainless hippies - what is the point of all that? If they were really concerned about how meaningless hippy life was, how hung up a poor old dirty dog feels because he can't get a screw, can't they find a better way of tackling it than just comic strip after comic strip of the very thing they should be fighting against.... which brings me to the conclusion that they are only in it for the money; oh and getting their pictures in the paper too.

Most of the cartoons are so meaningless there is nothing but that to say about them, some rely heavily on big, nude male chauvinists strutting about being big, nude, male chauvinists; a few good, old healthy motor bike freaks who take their women (and any-

thing else they want) by force, and of course Trashman that all-male fighter for the oppressed. If the underground must have heroes do they have to be brutal sexists? Do the heroines have to be either big-breasted sex kittens or brutal counterparts to the men? The only times women appeared in Nasty Tales No.1 was in order to be fucked, groped, grabbed or serve some other purpose in the sexually "liberated" egos of Farren, Barker and Lewis. It is about time we stopped getting our kicks from such sordid rubbish and started sorting out the people who make money out of drawing and publishing such travesties of liberation like Fritz the cat, that ego-tripping, male-chauvinist, agent-provocateur, who was such a box-office sell out on the screen.

Hip capitalism is no better than ordinary capitalism. Hip capitalists deserve the same fate of all capitalists. Deal with them as you think fit, but don't let them get away with it.*

Mary Godwin

Now you're having a baby will your legs ever be the same again?

A group of women in London are getting together a handbook on pregnancy and childbirth. This will include hospital experiences both ante-natal and in-patient, and how to combat the shitty treatment we have found almost universal. We would welcome any letters from women, who have had kids or are pregnant now and have suggestions and experiences. Anyone who has challenged and won in a hospital situation, we would especially like to hear from, as victories seem few and far between. Please name hospitals as a list of those that are horrific and those almost human would be very useful. Another

aspect we want to cover is the literature that pregnant women are inundated with, so much of it advertising propaganda, its sexist and patronising attitude and the way it sets women against women, 'Don't talk to women who have had babies, they will only frighten you; go to your doctor, HE really knows about pregnancy'!!!

Any other information, photos, advice is very welcome. To be most useful and practical we have to limit the scope of this handbook to the UK. Please send anything to Charlotte Baggins, c/o Anarchy Magazine, 29 Grosvenor Avenue, London N5.

The selling

(Review of 'The Female Eunuch' by
Germaine Greer)



of a feminist

Early last year, when the high priests of publishing began to discover that their female readers were insatiably curious about the women's liberation idea, there was much discussion as to which of the bountiful crop of feminist authors would become the big femme lib superstar. Betty Friedan had no appeal for the literary lions - she was too old, too bourgeoisie, too organization-conscious. Shulamith Firestone, the author of 'The Dialectic of Sex' and organizer of New York Radical Feminists, was strikingly attractive; but alas, anti-love, perhaps even anti-men. Ti-Grace Atkinson, an advocate of extra-uterine birth, was considered too far out for a whirl through the major networks. For a while it seemed as if the brilliant and beautiful Kate Millett, whose 'Sexual Politics' was for a short time on the best-seller list, might be star material. But she made the mistake of openly asserting her bisexuality. 'Time' took due note of this state of affairs, and that finished Millett. So who was left to launch on the Dick Cavett-Johnny Carson-Virginia Graham-'Time'-'Life' circuit? American feminists, with their dogged determination to be themselves, were a publicity man's nightmare. Someone more palatable would have to be found.

Or even imported. On a warm spring day, Germaine Greer, the author of the English best seller, 'The Female Eunuch', jetted into New York from London. Miss Greer was everything those messy American feminists were not: pretty, predictable, aggressively heterosexual, media-wise, clever, foreign, and exotic. Her background was fascinating. At thirty-two, she was an accomplished actress, a Ph.D. who lectured in Shakespeare at Warwick University, editor of the European pornographic journal, 'Suck', and contributor to various London underground newspapers. Her philosophy, as outlined in 'The Female Eunuch', could be expected to appeal to men: women's liberation means that women will be

sexually liberated; feminism equals free love. Here was a libbie a man could like.

Full-page ads announced that Miss Greer had written the women's liberation book of the year, and that despite this achievement, she was 'a feminist leader who admittedly loves men'. Six feet tall, fashion-model beautiful, Miss Greer was the toast of 'The Tonight Show'. Dick Cavett was enthusiastic about her. Norman Mailer suggested that her book was worth reading.

There is a catch to this fairy tale. Germaine Greer is not the feminist leader she is advertised to be. Back home in London she has no active connections with any women's liberation group. And the book she has written is hardly feminist. True, 'The Female Eunuch' does contain an obligatory enumeration of the many economic and psychological horrors that women are subjected to. But Miss Greer's information is hardly new, and could be gleaned from a half-dozen other books. What's more, the whole tone of 'The Female Eunuch' is shallow, anti-woman, regressive, three steps backward to the world of false sexual liberation from which so many young women have fled.

Miss Greer quite rightly asks women to abandon the institution of marriage, but she means to replace it simply with the dehumanizing, anonymous, and spiritually debilitating thrusting that men call sex. In her view, sex is something to be collected - like money. The more of it you get, the richer you are. The difficulty is that many feminists have been to that movie before. Many of the younger women in the movement recall a period, four or five years ago, when in order to qualify as hip, emancipated females, their alternate-culture brothers insisted they perform as sexual gymnasts. Resentment at this treatment is one powerful motive for the current women's movement.

The author's insistence that 'sexual liberation' is the prerequisite for women's liberation has a lot to do with the fact that she thinks like a man. She has done very well in the male world, and she has yet to identify herself with the essential condition of women. From her book, one learns that Germaine Greer has rarely (except during a miserable youth) had to suffer the kinds of misfortune that most women endure. She was always accepted in the world of men. She was always treated as an equal. That good fortune just about disqualifies her for writing a feminist book. She has had no experience of what it means to be adult and female in the world inhabited by most women, and she does not have the gift of imagination that could make up for that lack. Indeed, she consistently takes a viewpoint that is not merely male but inimical to women. Her book is littered with unkind and unfeminist snipes at her sisters. Most of the women in her book are described as whiny, simpy, and boring. 'As a female lecturer at a provincial university,' she complains in a typical passage, 'I have to tolerate the antics of faculty wives, but they are strikingly easy to ignore.' What separates Germaine Greer from women's liberationists is that a sensitive feminist would regard a faculty wife's failings as the end product of a useless, oppressive, and unfulfilling life. A feminist would feel sisterly sympathy for the faculty wife, and be interested in working with her to help change her condition.

Aside from the author's obvious misogyny, she exhibits very little respect for those women who are organizing against sexual oppression. Her chapters on 'Rebellion' and 'Revolution' are packed with contradictory ranting about how the women's revolution must be part of The Bigger Revolution, how the feminist movement is not militant enough, how the movement is too middle class. On the one hand, she exhorts the women's liberationists to be more militant in their fight against sexism. On the other, she suggests that women make love, not war. 'Women cannot be liberated from their impotence by the gun.... The process has to be the opposite: women must humanize the penis, take the steel out of it and make it flesh again.'

If Miss Greer has no patience with the state of the feminist movement, she has even

less love for the literary women who have aligned themselves with it. Betty Friedan is described as middle class and boring. Kate Millett 'persists in assuming that Norman Mailer is a cretin'. Anne Koedt, author of the important Women's Liberation pamphlet, 'The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm', is dismissed this way: 'One wonders just whom Miss Koedt has gone to bed with.'

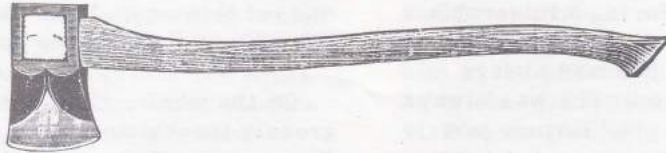
On the whole, 'The Female Eunuch' is a grossly inconsistent book. Yes, Germaine Greer says all the right things about the economics of sexism. Yes, she is extraordinarily observant about some of the physiological results of our sexual conventions. Her chapters on female anatomy are brilliant. Where she falls down is in her inveterate dislike of women, her idiotic exhortations to revolution and nonviolence alike, and her passionate identification with all things male.

Throughout history there have always been a few women who have been able to fight and seduce their way to the top of the patriarchy. In pre-revolutionary France, these women were highly educated, highly cultivated courtesans who provided intellectual and sexual stimulation for the male nobility. (What self-respecting noble would try to carry on an intelligent discussion with his wife?) Germaine Greer is the closest thing we have to this old-world, old-style courtesan. Nor would she be offended by this description. By her own admission, she is a groupie, a supergroupie - which means that she is a sexual and intellectual consort to the royalty of rock music. On television programs she has made comments like: 'I'm really just an intellectual superwhore!'

'The Female Eunuch' is designed to provide intellectual and sexual thrills to those men who would like to see a feminist revolution because it would take that one woman off their back and make a lot more women available to them. How nice to be told that women's liberation will mean the liberation of more women for bed service! One reading of 'The Female Eunuch' suggested to me that it had been written to assuage the fears of jittery male chauvinists. A second reading convinced me that if Germaine Greer didn't exist, Norman Mailer would have had to invent her.

Claudia Dreifus

THE NATURE OF NONVIOLENT FASCISM



AND THE GEORGE WOODCOCK MYTH

Historical myths can become difficult to controvert. As the "princes in the Tower" story shows, historical fiction - created as pure propaganda - is accepted and embellished. Deliberate falsifiers of history must be nailed. Sectarian propagandist George Woodcock is notorious for writing myths about the anarchist movement with which he was briefly, and disastrously, involved. He needs, for financial reasons, to be accepted by the Establishment, yet has no other qualification to offer but his "academic knowledge" of the anarchists. Catering to intellectual tastes, he has risen from railway clerk to professor. His article in "Anarchy" (last issue) is a casebook in the Woodcock myth. It also serves as a brief introduction into pacifist totalitarianism.

In the article he makes two major and sensational allegations against Anarchists, some living, some recently dead. He has no data to give so, as is normal with him, he gives his own "involvement" as the reason he "knows", but must perforce make it clear that his involvement was passivist and in no way detrimental to the Establishment. It is a variation of the way some Germans have made a living writing about Hitlerism. ("I knew Hitler intimately. But of course I never agreed with him" - the best of both worlds). In Woodcock's case all his history is total invention. He says, of major "atrocities" committed by the Spanish Anarchists that "it is established" that they committed them..... but by whom, or what? Even the Spanish

courts martials with the sensational, fantastic and inventive allegations made in the post-war period, made no such accusations as he now makes. Nobody was charged in innumerable court-martials with any of the crimes he lists.

Furthermore, he himself, for reasons of radical chic, is prepared to let his name go on the snob-appeal lists of "distinguished sponsors" put out by Spanish refugee organisations. Yet these are the very people one would not touch with a bargepole if the accusations he now makes against them are true, namely that "...many of the Spanish anarchists perpetrated the slaughter of defenceless men who happened to be in their power just because of their social backgrounds, their beliefs or even their sexual predilections (for it is established that Barcelona anarchists at one time rounded up male prostitutes and liquidated them)" which illustrates the "illusory nature of anarchist beliefs" (out of the explanation of which Prof. Woodcock has made a pretty penny).

Rather it illustrates the illusory nature of academic beliefs in Professor Woodcock, for part of this is untrue and the rest impossible.

While Franco killed thousands because of their "social backgrounds" - the Asturian miners for instance - it is not impossible that some aristocrats were killed because of their connections. But there is not one single name anyone can mention of anyone killed al-

though he sympathised with the republican cause just because he came from the upper or middle classes. Indeed the lie to this is given today by the students, whose parents came from precisely those classes, whose families because of their social background probably sympathised with Franco, openly in the fascist zone or secretly in the republican zone, but who have become anti-fascists or acratas. To do this, knowing their parents or uncles had been shot only for their social background by the people with whom they now associated, is the sort of impossibility shown in the Princess of the Tower story, whose mother indubitably remained on good terms with their alleged murderer.

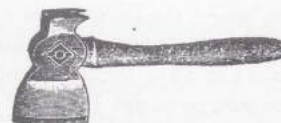
The reference to "beliefs" is, one takes it, a reference to the popular attacks on the Catholic Church. Here the fascists did allege "thousands" of priests and nuns killed. "Historians" vary according to their political beliefs. But they are silent on names. Everyone knowing the Spanish Church would know it needed only one priest or nun killed because of his or her belief and for no other reason, to realise that the grave of the person concerned would be a hallowed sanctuary, miracles would be worked at the tomb, the clergy would already be beatifying and preparing for canonisation. But there is not one fascist saint yet. On the contrary, the Church in assembly, by a small majority it is true (yet under Franco) recently apologised to the Spanish people and begged forgiveness for the role it played in the civil war against them. Its role was propaganda for Franco. But had the stories - echoed in Woodcock's "for their beliefs" been true - what would there be to forgive?

Or does Woodcock refer to the Communists? Or perhaps the Falange? Some could have been killed "for their beliefs" but we do not really know if this were so.

On the subject of the sexual "predilections" we have the deliberate propagandist lie which shows the nature of Woodcock's sectarianism. It is an impossible charge, and that Woodcock is consciously lying is shown in the fact that (living in modern Canada and incidentally well acquainted with the late Paul Goodman for one) he poses as ignorant of the difference between "gay" and "hustler" and lets one presume he does not know the difference between

"sexual predilections" and "male prostitution" (or that the latter could be heterosexual or homosexual). This from the author of one of the 97 best books on Oscar Wilde!

Assuming that he is referring to homosexuals (with sexual "predilections") could such a massacre have taken place, with the world press present, and no report appeared anywhere until "it is established" by Woodcock or someone else far from the scene? A few years before, Hitler killed many of his



followers in one night, for political deviancy, and to "justify" the action, accused them of homosexuality. There was a thrilled ripple of press and political comment which has not yet subsided. It is precisely the way political journalists and commentators like to titillate their readers. How, in Spain, could a witch hunt for homosexuals have taken place unnoticed? How could the anarchists, above all, have conducted one? There were some with puritanical beliefs but even they had never expressed any hatred of homosexuality (which would have been shouted down with derision at any meeting, as being a Catholic propagandist line). There were some distinguished homosexuals supporting the republican cause from the great Garcia Lorca to the notorious Dr Negrin. There were observers and soldiers from Britain, a large proportion of which were from the Auden-Isherwood gay circles. Were they disgracefully silent? Or is it a lie?

Most of them were members of the Communist Party, ready to invent or repeat lies about Spanish Anarchists, or attribute "atrocities" to them. Yet their silence is even more incomprehensible (if Woodcock is right) than that of three Anarchist women observers all of whom have hitherto been thought of as staunch supporters of homosexual rights. Emma Goldman (a disciple of Walt Whitman, a close friend of Edward Carpenter) was never known to remain silent or to refrain from criticism of her comrades if she thought it merited. She went to Spain and returned as the "ambassador" of the CNT-FAI. Her close collaborator was Ethel Mannin (disciple of Havelock Ellis). Yet another personal

observer of the scene, Marie-Louise Berneri (to whom Woodcock has admitted he owes a great deal in his career) went to Spain and made strong criticisms of the manner in which the libertarian movement had yielded to the Communist Party. Her knowledge of the scene was thorough. Her father was actively concerned in the struggle. Nowhere, however, and never did she observe this wanton massacre of gays or of persons "for their beliefs or social origins".

Not merely were these women criminally silent (something fantastic to those who knew them), or ignorant as compared with Woodcock (who was not present in Spain, or active in any way in any other country), not one of the "gays" had the wit to write to Emma Goldman to ask her to denounce such action in "Solidaridad Obrera" in conformity with her writings in "Mujeres Libres" and elsewhere. Yet in all social upheavals interested groups make every representation they can of this nature. It is an elementary law of preservation.

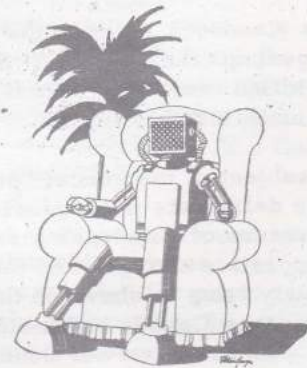
Perhaps Woodcock means the male prostitutes. Just as in the Russian Revolution when some sensational journalists said "women are to be nationalised" (a send-up of State control), some tried a little sexual titillation in their reports on Spain. Usually it was "nuns raped". (Unlike the raped nuns of the Congo, those of Spain had no crises of conscience regarding abortion or illegitimate children; the "Reds" proved singularly unfruitful with the "raped nuns" as compared with the Congolese soldiery.) Owing to the CNT, "the prostitutes (female) were joining the union" (giggles), they were "collectivising the brothels" (hysterical laughter and collapse of stout party). No such event happened. It was a send-up of workers' control. No reference whatever was made to male prostitutes. It would have been a good invented story, but no one thought of it.

Some of the protectors of the prostitutes in the barrio chino were shot down, by the girls themselves, in the middle of July 1936. (It had nothing to do with the anarchists.) There was a revolt of the girls against the Mafia-type ponces, many of whom were Falangists, or denounced as Falangists, and "shot for their beliefs" by the workers militias (not necessarily CNT). Thereafter the

prostitutes operated freely. There is no reason why one should suppose the ponces were also male hustlers, but such an incident could have been distorted by the unknown authority on which Woodcock relies. If it exists. For Woodcock had no connection with Spanish Anarchists and indulges only in the game of ripping off other people's books. He wishes to establish himself as an "anarchist" or "ex-anarchist", but always a pacifist, to justify himself to the academic world as a source of original material while maintaining his respectability.

This "princes in the tower" fabrication of Woodcock's casts light on his writings on the anarchist movement in Britain, in his book "Herbert Read: the Stream and the Source". Every single statement in it regarding the anarchist movement in Britain is inaccurate, half-true or deliberately false. Every word is designed to cast a glow on Woodcock and enhance his alleged intimacy with Herbert Read, the dean of English letters who could advance his career, or to disguise Woodcock's speculations. What has this to do with "Tolstoyanism"? Perhaps a great deal, as Orwell saw.

In this capacity he can compare the "ruthless, ... disciplined... aggressive..." Makhno with his "virtually conscript" levies and its "appalling resonances" (all in the Anarchy article), with the "gentle anarchist" (vide bourgeois press) Herbert Read, with his fundamental pacifist logic. Both commanded their regiments at about the same time. But there was indeed a great difference between them.



Makhno could not help fighting, but he directed his fighting to the anarchist cause and the peasant revolution. He could have risen to glory under the Tsar, made himself financially secure in the White Army, or been living to this day as a great and honoured General in the Red Army. Or he could have laid down and died (the possibility of appearing for ten minutes before a tribunal to explain he did not wish to fight, a course open to anyone reasonably fluent in England in the Second World War who could then go back to pursue his career, was not open to him as it was to Prof. Woodcock). He chose to arm the peasants, to fight for freedom, and to battle against impossible odds, in the course of which some mistakes may have happened but in which he managed to keep the banners of freedom flying before two great totalitarian armies pressed in on him. The men around him were illiterate peasants who had to be shown that revolution did not mean looting, and on balance, one may say Makhno not only fought for anarchism, he was the last hope of Russia before it collapsed in tyranny.

Read, at the same time, commanded a highly disciplined regiment, guilty of the most appalling carnage though nobody had any interests at stake, whose men were largely conscripted and used as cannon fodder, blindly led on by deception. Educated officers, such as Read, knew this. They could resign their commissions. Some, like Siegfried Sassoon, stood out against war; others like Russell and Brockway (and a great many others) went into prison rather than enter the Army, to emerge in later years as Labour councillors and even Cabinet Ministers, or plain workers. Read was no Haig or Kitchener - but once one becomes a lieutenant, the only reason one is not a general is lack of chance, not choice: there were many who chose to go into the army up to non-commissioned rank and still opposed government and war. But to take the commission meant to be with the war. Why is Read's captaincy to be "forgotten", as it is by those bourgeois critics who write that he was far from being the bloodthirsty anarchist etc. etc. (when he killed hundreds or perhaps thousands, where Emile Henry a handful and they guilty)? His murders were legal. This makes him a "pacifist".

A false picture is being painted by Woodcock of Read's role in the anarchist move-

ment, to glorify his own toadying to Read. Read for many years shopped around with the Communist Party, Social Credit and so on, but became attracted to the anarchist idea when the "murderous" Spanish anarchists were "massacring people for their beliefs". He identified himself with their cause, at first cautiously - compare Read's reserved, tactful entry in "Writers Take Sides" (on Spain) with Ethel Mannin's wholehearted support for the Anarchists. A few months later, as the whole literary establishment became anti-Franco, Read let himself go and supported the Spanish Anarchists and wrote his books on anarchism, some of them brilliant, even attending one or two British anarchist meetings. But he broke decisively with the anarchists in 1939, not because of his "gentle pacifism" but because he supported the war. He began to conceal his anarchism under names like "the new order" "guild socialism" "new democracy" etc. not because of the "violence" of the anarchists but because he was with the Establishment and wholeheartedly for mass warfare. Woodcock, coming along that time on a pacifist ticket, was all things to all men (hiding his pacifism to the anarchists long enough to rip off the press and build up his literary reputation by printing his mag at their expense).

Orwell saw through Woodcock's pacifism, and he was very perceptive on the nature of pacifist totalitarianism. (His criticisms of "pacifists and anarchists" are all based on the Woodcock circle, and contrast vividly with his pleased though rare encounters with working class anarchists). Gandhi is, of course, as Orwell saw, no less a totalitarian than Hitler. His pacifism is based on brainwashing, just as is Hitler's. It is a means of apparently challenging the ruling class, yet the revolutionary appeal it makes deflects the class struggle and leads to authoritarianism. Gandhi is, of course, the supreme non-violent fascist, and his moral dictatorship was even more widespread than Hitler's - and while on balance one must prefer Gandhi to Hitler, yet if Gandhi had carried out Hitler's programme he would have succeeded where Hitler had failed. To be dependent on the goodwill of a dictator is part of liberal thinking, but it is the reverse of anarchism. This totalitarianism Orwell saw in Tolstoy (where perhaps it is unconscious).

In fact, this non-violent fascism which is implicit in all Woodcock's thinking (for he knows nothing of anarchism; and his book on it avoids theory and describes history - inaccurately - and then is padded out with his research on Oscar Wilde) runs through a lot of liberal thinking and is sometimes passed off as anarchism. But it has nothing whatever to do with anarchism as a living force, and is invariably accompanied by denials that anarchism is possible. It represents to anarchism what national-socialism represents to socialism - having some of the features, but utilised to the benefit of the ruling class and capable of subservience to dictatorship. This is implicit in Read, who never moved from the Establishment (and whose acceptance of a knighthood was no aberration), and could on the one hand proclaim his "non-violence" as regards the working class revolution yet leave the Committee of 100 because "it was apparently attacking the RAF rather than criticising the Government". Yet Read is infinitely superior to Woodcock, because he is a real liberal, bound by his financial interests to the Establishment, yet having a warmth of understanding of liberal ideas. While he cannot bring himself to support anarchists in any situations other than those in which they have a seeming legality, for instance the Spanish revolution when of course it was technically the fascists who were in rebellion - or for that matter in the Ukraine when the Makhnovistas were no more illegal than anyone else - yet his contribution to libertarian thought, within that limitation, was of interest though he was no Makhno to reject advancement and live poor. It is a minor interest admittedly, but as a populariser of libertarian educational ideas, he was one of the best in the field. Woodcock, on the other hand, as a mere glorifier of himself, who never fails to criticise Cohn-Bendit as a rival or to appropriate Read for himself, has nothing to say on anarchism. He is a fake within his own academic terms of reference. But he is sincere only in his insistence upon non-violent fascism.

For pacifism is not to do with the degree of violence one uses. It is an idealisation of the cult of non-violence, which seeks to label revolution "violent" and invariably excuses war and legal massacre, however it may huff and puff on the subject at safe times (e.g. war-time England, or peace-time). It cannot bear

dissension. There have been imperialist armies with pacifist bodies such as the Quakers serving in them, and Gandhi recruited for the First World War on the basis that his soldiers would be used in non-combatant regiments, but there could never be a non-violent majority tolerating different action by a minority. If this happens then, as with Freedom's take-over pacifist fraction, it has to denounce it as "wicked" and range up with the State in denunciations.

In time of war, pacifism appears to be revolutionary and is linked with radical movements. In times like the present, when revolution is in the air, the pacifist slogans are part and parcel of the cant of the Establishment. "Violence achieves nothing," write Major-Generals; "A dangerous cult of violence", proclaim retired Colonels; "The romantic view of violence", declare military historians. They are as unconscious as judges of hypocrisy.


It is not today the fascist aping the methods of the Bolshevik who is the menace, but the fascist aping anarchism or rather aping hybrid anarcho-pacifism. There is no chance of a Gandhi arising again to establish his military state by use of moral force. But there is every possibility of a popularisation of the views of the Establishment against the working class by means of a fake anarcho-pacifism - indeed, in the USA an "anarcho-capitalist" Libertarian Party has already appeared! The academic who is out to make a quick buck by his fake researches based on sectarian propaganda becomes dangerous: a Woodcock now, as a Rosenberg once, does the intellectual bulldozing that the authoritarian wants.

Albert Meltzer





Cork, Decenber 11, 1920. Burnt by members of the Auxiliary Division.



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